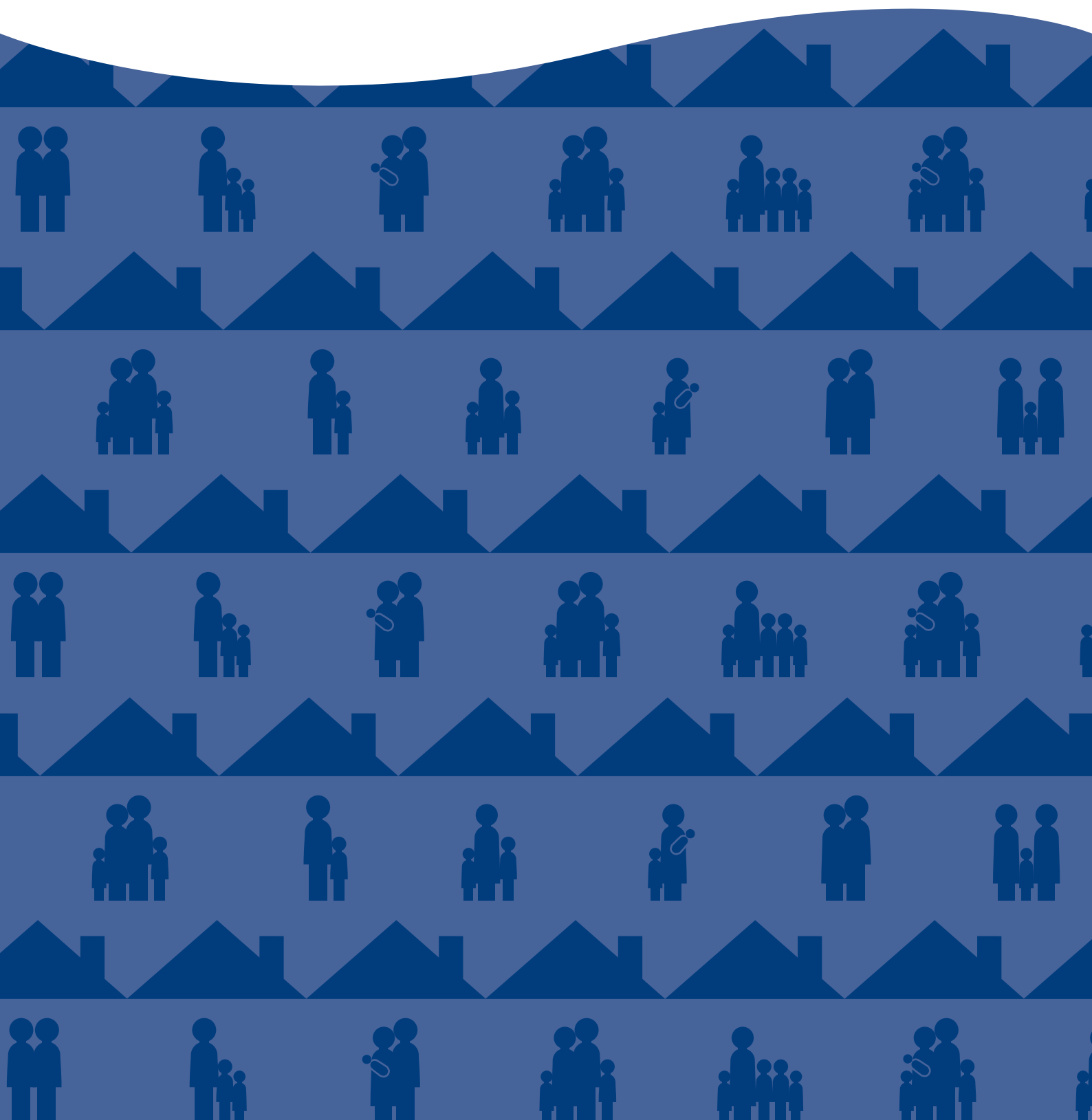


Housing Allocation Scheme 2008

The allocations policy



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Introduction

This Housing Allocation Scheme 2008 marks a major change in the way Lambeth Council allocates its rented housing, and the way it nominates people to rented housing owned by registered social landlords (housing associations).

The Scheme introduces choice-based lettings in Lambeth. Instead of Council staff deciding who should be offered properties, housing applicants themselves will play an active role in choosing their homes.

The Council has joined Home Connections, a choice-based lettings service already used by nine other London boroughs to run similar schemes. The positive experience of these other boroughs makes us confident that our new scheme will be effective and popular with applicants. Of course there is still a severe housing shortage in Lambeth, with many times more people applying for council or housing association housing than there are homes available. Introducing choice-based lettings cannot solve this underlying problem.

As a result, much of this booklet is taken up with explaining how the Council prioritises applicants for housing. When more than one applicant is interested in an available property, the Council chooses between them on the basis of which has the higher priority. Priority is mainly based on housing need – i.e. a household's current housing situation. Some priority is given for other reasons, such as how long a household has been on the Council's housing list.

Following consultation with council tenants and leaseholders, local housing associations, and other interested parties, the new Scheme was agreed by the Council's Executive in March 2007. Choice-based lettings will begin in April 2008. This Scheme replaces the Housing Allocation Scheme 2004 (Third Edition) which was previously in operation.

Aims

The aims of the Allocation Scheme are as follows:

- To meet the Council's statutory duties in allocating Council housing and making nominations to housing associations and other councils.
- To meet the Council's aims in respect of equality and choice, so far as is possible.
- To help build and sustain diverse and balanced communities, and strengthen networks of family support.
- To enable properties to be relet quickly, and so make efficient use of housing resources.
- To maximise opportunities for mobility among tenants of social housing (i.e. Council and housing association tenants).
- To minimise the cost of homelessness to the Council and to council tax payers.
- To work with other providers and agencies to make the best use of affordable housing from all sources to meet need.

Scope

Lettings covered by the Allocation Scheme

This Allocation Scheme sets out the Council's arrangements for allocating housing accommodation within the meaning of Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996, i.e.:

- The selection of applicants to be offered secure or introductory tenancies by the Council
- Nominations to secure or introductory tenancies from other councils (or other bodies able to grant secure tenancies)
- Nominations to assured tenancies and assured shortholds (including 'starter' tenancies) from registered social landlords.

Lettings not covered by the Scheme

The following are examples of lettings not covered by, or specifically excluded from Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. As such, they are not covered by this Allocation Scheme:

- Offers of secure tenancies of their current homes to introductory tenants of the Council
- Offers of tenancies which are not secure tenancies by virtue of Paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 4A, 5, 6, 7 or 10 of Schedule 1 to the Housing Act 1985, as amended
- Offers made to Council secure or introductory tenants at the Council's own instigation, rather than in response to an application from them: for example, to tenants being decanted, or to under-occupying successors
- Offers to displaced residential owners under the Land Compensation Act 1973
- Offers to former owner-occupiers or statutory tenants of defective dwelling houses
- Transfers of tenancies made by Court Order under the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 or other family legislation.
- Assignments of, and successions to, Council tenancies
- Mutual exchanges of Council tenancies
- Nominations for offers of tenancies or licences from private landlords
- Nominations for shared ownership leases.

Equality

Equality and diversity in housing – a way of life

The Council believes that all residents in Lambeth should have the opportunity and choice of living in good quality, affordable housing within strong, healthy and secure communities.

Lambeth Housing celebrates the fact that it serves a socially diverse community. We are committed to meeting the needs of the whole of that community in the provision of housing allocations, housing regeneration, neighbourhood management, services to the homeless, housing advice, housing benefits, through working with the private sector and our housing partners.

We are committed to equality of opportunity for all people – This means that regardless of race, gender, age, culture, faith or disability, our residents should have access to housing services that meet their needs.

We do not tolerate any kind of discrimination against any people – whether the discrimination is direct (e.g. abusive language), or indirect (through policies, procedures or practices that impact on people differently), and whether the discrimination is on the grounds of race, gender, sexuality, age, disability, culture or faith.

We will seek to increase representation in decision making – We recognise that Black and ethnic minority people are currently under-represented in tenants' and residents' associations. We will seek to increase participation in decision-making structures to reflect Lambeth's diversity. This will include increasing the opportunities for young people to participate.

We are working towards improving access to our services for people with disabilities – We recognise that not all facilities and services are accessible for people with disabilities and we are working towards reducing barriers.

We aim to strengthen and sustain communities and to develop social inclusion – No person or group of people should be excluded from fully participating in their community. To allow equal opportunity to participate, some groups may need more support from Lambeth Housing than others.

We seek to continually review and develop services in consultation with you – The only way we can be sure our services are meeting the needs of a diverse community is to monitor the use of those services and constantly talk with a wide range of people. The results of monitoring and consultation will then be used in planning to refine services.

We require our staff to comply with this statement, and all suppliers, contractors and partners to operate within a culture of equality consistent with this statement.

We are committed to equalities within all our work, and will ensure that our policies, procedures and practices do not discriminate against any group of people, and promote the inclusion of all. This will be done through a review process monitored through our Race Equality Scheme and Departmental planning. We will also maintain specific policies to remove harassment and discrimination amongst our staff, and in our services to clients.

Equality and allocations

The development of a clear and consistent Allocation Scheme including choice-based lettings goes hand in hand with careful monitoring to ensure that housing allocations are fair, and seen to be fair.

It is important that the Allocation Scheme is accessible to all applicants. Information leaflets and other communications that are easily understandable, along with translations, large print and Braille versions, will be made available as appropriate. Interpreters will be used for applicants seeking advice and assistance who require that service.

How an application is made

Any applicant may approach the Council and ask to join the housing list. The first step is to fill in the appropriate form. There are two forms, a pink form for the transfer list and a green form for the housing register.

Sometimes the Council takes the initiative itself to rehouse a household. Where such households are already secure or introductory tenants of the Council, such cases are outside the scope of the Allocation Scheme (see page 2).

What is the difference between the transfer list and the housing register?

These are simply names for different parts of the housing list.

Council tenants who want to move, and the tenants of some registered social landlords (see page 26), are put on the **transfer list**.

Other households are placed on the **housing register**.

Who can join the housing list?

Anyone can join the housing list except:

- People from abroad who are subject to immigration control under the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, **unless** they are either:
 - already a secure or introductory tenant of a council
or
 - an assured tenant of housing to which they were nominated by a council
or
 - in a class prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State.
- People prescribed as ineligible in any regulations made by the Secretary of State, **unless** they are either:
 - already a secure or introductory tenant of the Council
or
 - an assured tenant of housing allocated to them by the Council.
- Applicants who themselves, or members of whose households, have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour, and are unsuitable to be Council tenants (see below).
- Dependant children.

Any person who is refused admission to the housing list will be notified of this by means of a letter to their home or contact address, giving grounds for the decision. The letter will also be made available for collection from the appropriate Council office for a period of 28 days.

If at any time the Council obtains information that leads it to believe that an applicant already on the housing list is ineligible, it will inform the applicant in writing. The applicant will be given 28 days to provide information showing that they are eligible. If they do not reply within this period, or if they reply but the Council remains of the view that they are ineligible, they will be removed from the housing list.

Young people aged 16 and 17

Non-dependant applicants aged 16 and 17 may join the housing list if they require independent or semi-independent accommodation not provided by the Children and Young People's Service. Examples include lone teenage parents under 18, and young people leaving care.

Offers made to young people under 18 will normally be of licences to occupy accommodation, rather than tenancies.

What is unacceptable behaviour?

Unacceptable behaviour is behaviour which, if the person concerned were a secure Council tenant, would entitle the Council to obtain a possession order against them on one or more of Grounds 1 to 7 of Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985. Such behaviour includes:

- Failing to pay the rent
- Breaching a condition of the tenancy agreement
- Causing nuisance to neighbours
- Being convicted of using their home for immoral or illegal purposes
- Being convicted of an arrestable offence committed in, or in the vicinity of their home
- Causing the condition of the property to deteriorate by a deliberate act, or by neglect
- Making a false statement to obtain a tenancy.

The Council will apply a three-step test. First, is there a known act or history of 'bad' behaviour, providing a relevant ground of possession? Second, if so, was that behaviour such that a court would have granted a possession order? Third, if so, is the applicant **as of now** unsuitable to be a Council (or RSL) tenants because of that behaviour? If he is, the person will normally be regarded as ineligible to join the housing list.

In cases where the Council concludes that a suspended order for possession would have been granted, generally it will regard the applicant as suitable provided there is compliance with what would have been the terms of the suspension.

Where the Council has reason to believe that unacceptable behaviour is due to a physical, mental or learning disability, the person will not be determined as ineligible without first considering whether they would be able to maintain a tenancy satisfactorily with appropriate care and support. In such cases the Council will consult as appropriate with any relevant agencies, including Adults' and Community Services, the Children and Young People's Service, the Medical Adviser, and/or local providers of support services.

Any applicant notified that they are being treated as ineligible to join the housing list because of unacceptable behaviour may request a review of the decision (see page 28).

If the review confirms that the applicant is to be treated as ineligible, the applicant may still make a fresh application to the Council at a future date, when the applicant feels they should no longer be treated as ineligible. The Council will consider this fresh application on its merits. However, unless there has been a considerable lapse of time, it will be for the applicant to show that their circumstances or behaviour have changed substantially.

Reciprocal arrangements

Other councils and housing associations occasionally approach the Council asking it to house a person outside the established channels, and offering a reciprocal vacancy for a Lambeth nominee. The Council may also initiate such arrangements.

The Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing reserves the right to initiate, accept or refuse reciprocal arrangements, according to circumstances.

Keeping applications up to date

Applicants must notify the Council when their circumstances change. Any necessary amendments will then be made to their application.

At intervals the Council will write to applicants asking them if they still wish to apply for housing. The Council will also ask whether there have been any changes in their circumstances.

The Council's letter will give the applicant 28 days from the date of receipt to supply the information required. After a further reminder, applicants will be removed from the housing list if they fail to respond in the specified period, or if they indicate that they no longer want to apply for housing.

How needs are assessed

The Council's assessment of an applicant's needs consists of:

- placing them in one of the eight Allocation Groups, as appropriate
- in the case of applicants in Groups D and H, calculating their points according to the Points Scheme (see page 12), and in the case of the other Groups, determining the appropriate level within that Group
- assessing the size of home they require (see page 14)
- considering applicants with high priority for authorisation for an offer (see page 16).

Giving reasonable preference

Section 167(2) of the Housing Act 1996 stipulates that in making allocations, the Council must give reasonable preference to certain categories of people.

The categories are:

- (a) people who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 7 of the Act);
- (b) people who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under s190(2), s193(2) or s195(2) (or under s65(2) or s68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under s192(3);
- (c) people who are occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- (d) people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability; and
- (e) people who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or to others.

The Scheme is framed so as to give additional preference to households identified as having the most urgent housing needs and/or composite needs. The Scheme also makes provision for determining the priority of different applicants in these categories, taking into account various factors.

The Allocation Groups

Applicants eligible for the housing list are placed in one of eight Allocation Groups. The Council decides which Group an application should be placed in after making appropriate enquiries and/or assessments. The Groups are:

Group A – right to return (see below)

Group B – emergencies (see page 7)

Group C – supply transfers (see page 8)

Group D – mainstream transfers (see page 9)

Group E – statutorily homeless households (see page 9)

Group F – referrals (see page 10)

Group G – high priority out-of-borough applicants (see page 11)

Group H – mainstream housing register (see page 11)

It is expected that over 80% of applicants to the housing list at any time will fall into Allocation Groups D and H, the 'mainstream' groups. The Points Scheme (see page 12) applies to both these Groups.

The other Allocation Groups (A-C, E-G) are smaller. Most applicants within each of these groups will have similar needs, but to cater for situations where needs within a Group are significantly different, some of these groups have different 'levels' within them, as detailed below.

Group A – right to return

This Group covers Council tenants* who have transferred or been decanted from their home temporarily, usually to allow major repairs to be carried out to their home, and who were given the right to return to the same property. There are two conditions:

- they must have indicated at the time of moving out that they wished to exercise the right to return when the property again became available for letting
- and**
- the property concerned must not be more than one bedroom larger than the household's allowed property size (see page 14).

The right to return only lasts until the construction work to the property is finished and it is ready for letting. The tenant must then exercise their right to return without delay when the property is offered to them.

The right to return to a different dwelling on the same site or a different site may be agreed by the Council on a case-by-case or scheme-by-scheme basis, at the discretion of the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing.

There is only one level in Group A.

If a household has been placed in Group A at the Council's original instigation, the allocation to them falls outside the scope of this Allocation Scheme (see page 2).

Group B – emergencies

Households are placed in this Group for one of the following reasons:

- households requiring very urgent rehousing on medical grounds to a property suitable to their needs (or to a property capable of being made suitable with appropriate aids and adaptations)
- to avoid a serious threat of violence or harassment to a Lambeth Council tenant or a member of their household, where management action against the perpetrator(s) cannot resolve the situation
- to alleviate the statutory overcrowding of a Lambeth Council tenant, save where the tenant has caused the overcrowding by inviting additional persons to live with them
- to comply with a Court Order or Ombudsman recommendation for urgent rehousing
- other cases recognised as emergencies in terms of the applicants' needs by the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing, not fitting into the above categories.

Medical priority

The Council's Medical Adviser will make a judgment on each household considered as a whole, based on the effect that their existing accommodation has on the medical condition of household members, including grounds relating to a disability, and the anticipated benefit from rehousing.

Cases will only be placed in Group B if the household has one or more members with a currently life-threatening illness or disability, whose housing circumstances are, in the opinion of the Medical Adviser, affecting their health very severely.

Other households with an accepted case for rehousing will be placed in Groups D or H, and awarded an appropriate level of points on medical grounds (see page 12).

Serious threat of violence/harassment to a Council tenant*

To be placed in Group B for this reason the tenant or a member of their household must, in the opinion of the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing, have received a serious threat of violence or harassment which is likely to be carried out, in circumstances where action by the Council and/or the Police against the perpetrator(s) of the threat cannot reasonably be expected to resolve the situation.

Other households threatened with violence/harassment will be placed in Group D or H, and awarded an appropriate level of points on welfare grounds (see page 12).

Statutory overcrowding of a Council tenant*

If a Council tenant's household is statutorily overcrowded as defined in Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985, they will be placed in Group B, except where they have caused the overcrowding by inviting additional persons to live with them.

There are two levels in Group B. Applicants in Group B are all in emergency circumstances, and therefore generally have a similar, very high level of need. Applicants will therefore normally be placed on Level 1. However, a case may be recognised as exceptionally urgent (bearing in mind that all Group B cases are emergencies), in which case the applicant will be placed on Level 2.

Applicants who do not reside in the Borough will not be placed in Group B. Instead, if they meet the criteria for Group B, they will be placed in Group G (see page 11).

* and tenants of certain RSLs (see page 26)

Group C – supply transfers

The following applicants will be placed in Group C:

- tenants being decanted by the Council*
- underoccupying Council tenants* who are willing to move to a smaller property
- returning foster carers
- retiring/redundant Council service occupiers
- occupiers of recalled Council shortlife properties

Tenants being decanted by the Council

A decant is a move by a Council tenant* (or authorised occupant) whom the Council needs to rehouse in order to redevelop, rehabilitate, refurbish, demolish, or dispose of the property. This category includes major repairs transfers without a Court deadline.

In exceptional cases, people other than tenants and authorised occupants living in Council property awaiting action of the above sort may be included in this category, at the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing's discretion.

Underoccupying tenants

Underoccupying tenants are those occupying a property of a size larger than their allowed property size (see page 14), who are willing to move to a smaller property of the size their household now requires. Council tenants in this situation will be placed in Group C. Tenants of RSLs which have entered into an agreement with the Council on underoccupation will also be placed in this Group.

Some underoccupying tenants are entitled to a financial payment under the Council's Transfer Incentive Scheme when they move. The conditions for eligibility for the transfer incentive scheme, and the amount or amounts of the incentive payments, are as agreed by the Council from time to time (details available on request).

Returning foster carers

Council tenants who have been moved by the Children and Young People's Service to larger private sector accommodation, so that they could foster children being looked after by the Council will, when they cease fostering, be offered wherever possible a property comparable to the one they vacated in order to begin fostering.

To be eligible, a household must have previously signed a written rehousing agreement to this effect.

In offering a comparable property, the Council will attempt so far as possible to offer a property which matches the foster carer's previous Council property in terms of:

- dwelling type (flat, house etc)
- storey height (i.e. no higher than previous home)
- garden, if any
- central heating, if any

The Council will attempt to identify an available comparable property for a period of four months from formal notification by the Children and Young People's Service of a returning foster carer (such notification to be accompanied by a completed housing register application form). If after four months it has been unable to identify an available comparable property, the Council may offer the returning foster carer any property which is suitable for their household.

Retiring or redundant Council service occupiers

A service occupier is someone occupying tied accommodation as a condition of their employment with Lambeth Council (whether as a service licensee or a service tenant), for the better performance of their duties.

When a service occupier retires, or is made redundant, they will be placed in Group C for an offer of alternative accommodation, provided they do not own a property elsewhere which is, or could be, available for their occupation.

* and tenants of certain RSLs (see page 26)

Service occupiers who originally gave up a Council secure tenancy to take up the service occupancy and who later transfer to other employment with the Council (without tied accommodation), will also be placed in Group C for an offer of alternative accommodation, provided they are not property owners elsewhere.

Service occupiers leaving in other circumstances may also be included for rehusing in Group C, dependant on their employment contracts or on the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing's discretion.

Council employees who are dismissed for misconduct, or who resign in advance of disciplinary proceedings, will not be eligible for inclusion in Group C.

Authorised occupiers of recalled Council shortlife properties

When Lambeth Council shortlife housing is recalled for return to the Council's permanent stock, for transfer to a registered social landlord, or for any other purpose, authorised occupiers of the property will be placed in Group C.

Group C has three levels. Normally applicants in Group C will be placed on Level 1. Applicants eligible for the Transfer Incentive Scheme will be placed on Level 2. If a case is assessed as particularly urgent in comparison with other Group C cases (bearing in mind that emergencies will be transferred to Group B), the applicant will be placed on Level 3.

If a Council secure or introductory tenant has been placed in Group C at the Council's original instigation, any allocation to them falls outside the scope of this Allocation Scheme (see page 2).

Group D – mainstream transfers

Council tenants* on the transfer list (see page 4) who do not qualify for any other Allocation Group will be placed in Group D.

The Points Scheme which applies to Group D applicants is set out on page 12.

Group E – statutorily homeless households

The Council will place in this Group any applicants to whom it owes a housing duty under s193(2) of the Housing Act 1996, as amended, or whom it decides to offer housing under s192(3) of the Act.

Applicants housed in temporary accommodation leased from the private sector will be placed on Level 1 for the first year of their occupancy. This recognises the fact that such accommodation, although temporary, is of a better standard than other temporary accommodation. However, where the lease of such a property is within three months of expiry, or within six months of expiry if the applicant household's allowed property size (see page 14) is four bedrooms or more, and there are no plans to renew the lease, the applicant will be placed on Level 3. If at any time prior to vacant possession of this temporary accommodation being returned, a new lease is in fact granted, the applicant will revert to Level 2.

In any case where the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing is satisfied that an applicant has a higher relative level of need over others within the Group (but not justifying Group B), because:

- they are occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing condition; and/or
- they need to move on medical or welfare or disability grounds from his present accommodation; and/or
- they need to move to a particular area within Lambeth, failing which they (or others) will suffer hardship;

then the applicant may be promoted from Level 1 to Level 2 (or Level 3 in exceptional cases) or from Level 2 to Level 3 as appropriate. In the case of an applicant on Level 3 no additional priority is given because the applicant will have the highest level of priority available under the scheme already. Nothing will prevent the Council from securing at its election alternative suitable temporary accommodation under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and then re-assessing the applicant's needs.

* and tenants of certain RSLs (see page 26)

Group F – referrals

In this Group are placed applicants who have been referred to Lambeth Housing under guidelines which have been agreed with certain referral agencies, specifically Lambeth Environmental Health, Lambeth Adults' and Community Services, Lambeth Children and Young People's Service, Women's Aid and a number of voluntary agencies providing special needs hostel accommodation.

With the exception of Lambeth Environmental Health, applicants are referred by the above agencies with a commitment that they will provide them with appropriate continuing support after they are rehoused.

In all cases, the applicants referred must be eligible to join the housing list (see page 4).

Environmental Health referrals

Applicants referred by the Council's environmental health officers following issue of an unfitness notice, overcrowding direction, closing order or demolition order (under Parts 9, 10 or 11 of the Housing Act 1985) are placed in this Group.

Adults' and Community Services, and Children and Young People's Service referrals

Cases will only be placed in Group F where:

- the applicant is a young person aged 16 or over leaving care, and is ready for independent living; or
- in family cases, rehousing would:
 - prevent the likelihood of significant harm to a child in the family. The significant harm must relate to the safety of a child, and specific aspects of the current accommodation. The risk of significant harm will be evidenced by an assessment under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.
 - facilitate discharge of children under 18 from care to their own or substitute families (including long-term foster parents); or

- the applicant is a single parent aged under 18 who is inadequately housed or housed in temporary supervised accommodation; or
- in health- or disability-related cases where:
 - the applicant is recovering from or suffering mental illness and needs housing to prevent family breakdown or admission to hospital or residential care; or is ready to move on from supported accommodation
 - the applicant is a person with learning difficulties who is ready for independent living
 - rehousing would facilitate discharge from or prevent admission to a Lambeth elderly persons' home.

Any Council tenant referred must be living in housing circumstances that are exacerbating their social situations: the provision of alternative accommodation must be considered essential to assist in the short - or long-term resolution of these problems.

The Group F referral must be approved by the appropriate Service Manager in Adults' and Community Services or the Children and Young People's Service. Other cases of social need will be placed in Groups D or H and awarded appropriate points on welfare grounds (see page 12).

Women's Aid

A woman at risk of domestic violence, regardless of her existing tenure or whether she has a local connection with the Borough, may be placed in Group F if she:

- is referred by a Women's Aid organisation under a referral agreement with Lambeth Housing

and

- has not been accepted by the Council as statutorily homeless under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

Access scheme

The Access scheme covers referral arrangements with specialist voluntary organisations managing short-stay supported housing for homeless single people.

A single homeless person who is not a Council tenant may be included in Group F if they:

- are referred by a voluntary sector agency that has an Access referral agreement with the Council

and

- live in supported short-stay housing

and

- have not been accepted by the Council as being statutorily homeless under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996

There are two levels in Group F.

Most applicants in Group F are considered to have a similar high level of need and will be placed on Level 1. If a case is assessed as exceptionally urgent because of the particular needs of the household (whether a specific need, or composite needs) (bearing in mind that emergencies will be transferred to Group B), the applicant will be placed on Level 2.

Group G – high priority applicants from other boroughs

Applicants not resident in Lambeth are at liberty to apply to the Council for housing provided they meet the eligibility criteria (see page 4, Who can join the housing list?).

Such applicants will be placed in an appropriate allocation group depending on their circumstances (normally Group H). However the following applicants will be placed in Group G:

- Applicants not resident in the Borough living in circumstances which would otherwise lead to them being put into Group B (emergencies).
- Applicants who have been nominated to, and had their nomination accepted by, the Council under a recognised mobility scheme.

Arrangements for mobility schemes at regional and national level are currently under review. A London-wide scheme, Capital Moves, is being developed by London Councils.

Applicants who are nominated to the Council under a mobility scheme and whose nominations are accepted by the Council, will be placed in Group G.

The Council will accept such nominations for a time-limited period, normally six months. If nominated households have not been rehoused at the end of this period their nomination will be reviewed, and may be returned to the nominating authority, at which point the household will cease to be eligible for Group G.

Additionally, any applicant on the housing list who is not resident in the Borough, and is in circumstances which would otherwise lead to them being put into Group B (emergencies) will be placed in Group G.

There are two levels in Group G. Incoming nominees under a mobility scheme whose nominations have been accepted by the Council will normally be placed on Level 1. Out-of-borough applicants in circumstances which would otherwise lead to them being put into Group B (whether or not they are mobility scheme nominees) will be placed on Level 2.

Group H – mainstream housing register

Applicants on the housing register (see page 9) who do not qualify for any other Allocation Group will be placed in Group H.

The Points Scheme which applies to Group H applicants is set out on page 12.

The Points Scheme

Applicants in Groups D and H are prioritised by means of a points scheme.

Housing needs

Points are awarded according to households' needs on the following basis:

Homelessness

Homeless under Part 7 of the Act, and not owed a duty by any local authority under s190(2) or s195(2) of the Housing Act 1996, nor occupying accommodation secured by another authority under s192(3) (nor under s65(2) or s68(2) of the Housing Act 1985)

Points

20

Homeless and owed a duty by another housing authority under s190(2) or s195(2) of the Housing Act 1996, or occupying accommodation secured by another authority under s192(3) (or under s65(2) or s68(2) of the Housing Act 1985)

5

NB Statutorily homeless households owed a permanent rehousing duty by Lambeth Council under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 will be placed in Group E. Applicants eligible for the above points are not also entitled to points in respect of accommodation occupied (see below).

Occupying accommodation which is insanitary, overcrowded, or living in unsatisfactory housing conditions.

Lacking cooking facilities

15

Sharing cooking facilities with another household

5

No hot water supply to sink

10

No bath or shower

15

Sharing bathroom and/or WC with another household

5

No inside WC

10

No living room (not applicable to single person applicants)

10

Sharing living room with another household (in the case of single person applicants, sharing their only room)

5

No central heating

5

Overcrowding as compared with the allowed property size for the household (see page 27) – per bedroom lacking

10

Bedroom leading off another bedroom

5

Children under 12 housed on the 6th floor or above – per household

5

NB Lambeth Council tenants who are statutorily overcrowded under Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985 will be placed in Group B. Council tenants who require rehousing in order for repairs to be carried out to their homes will be placed in Group C. Other households served with an unfitness notice, overcrowding direction, or closing or demolition order by the Council's Environmental Health Department will be placed in Group F.

Medical and welfare grounds and/or need to move to a particular locality to avoid hardship to self or others (NB where members of the household have distinct needs of this sort, these points may be awarded in respect of different household members, and in that case will be cumulative)

Urgent need of rehousing on medical grounds, including grounds related to a disability, as assessed by the Medical Adviser (but not justifying Group B)

25

Less urgent need of rehousing on medical grounds, including grounds related to a disability, as assessed by the Medical Adviser

10

Urgent need of rehousing on welfare grounds or to avoid hardship to self or others, as assessed by the Adults' and Community Services or the Children and Young People's Service (but not justifying Group F)

25

Less urgent need of rehousing on welfare grounds or to avoid hardship to self or others, as assessed by the Adults' and Community Services or the Children and Young People's Service

10

| | Points |
|--|----------|
| Urgent need of housing to avoid a threat of violence or harassment to a Lambeth Council tenant*, where management action against the perpetrator(s) cannot resolve the situation (but not justifying Group B) | 25 |
| Less urgent need of housing to avoid a threat of violence or harassment to a Lambeth Council tenant*, where management action against the perpetrator(s) cannot resolve the situation | 10 |
| <i>NB Applicants with a very urgent need for rehousing on medical grounds, as assessed by the Medical Adviser, or subject to a serious threat of violence or harassment, that is likely to be carried out, will be placed in Group B. Applicants with a very urgent need for rehousing on welfare grounds, or to avoid hardship to self or others, will be placed in Group F. Applicants not resident in the Borough but with a need to live in a particular locality in Lambeth, who are nominated through a mobility scheme or are emergency cases, will be placed in Group G.</i> | |
| Other exceptional grounds | |
| Any other urgent need not allowed for in the points scheme, and not justifying placement in another Group, considered by the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing to warrant an additional measure of priority | 10 or 25 |

Accommodation released

When they move, transferring tenants give back their current accommodation, and it can then be used to satisfy the needs of another household. Additional points are therefore awarded to some transferring tenants in Allocation Group D according to the size and type of property they currently occupy, if it will be particularly useful in meeting other households' needs.

The following additional points are awarded:

| | |
|--|----|
| To tenants vacating a four-bedroom or larger property | 15 |
| To tenants vacating a three-bedroom property | 10 |
| To tenants vacating a two-bedroom property | 5 |
| To tenants vacating a house (in addition to the above) | 5 |

Local connection

Applicants do not need to have a local connection with Lambeth to join the housing list. However, given the high housing pressure in the Borough, Lambeth residents and key workers in the Borough are awarded extra points, as follows:

| | |
|--|----|
| Resident in the Borough for the past 12 months (or longer) | 25 |
| Working in the Borough as a key worker (as defined by the Council for allocation purposes from time to time) | 5 |

Time spent on the housing list

Households will be allocated 2 extra points for each full year they have spent on the housing register or transfer list waiting for an offer.

Changes to points levels

The Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing is authorised to amend the points level given for any factor within the points scheme in the interests of better meeting the aims of the Allocation Scheme, or otherwise achieving a fairer balance of allocations.

All applicants will then have their points levels recalculated, and those affected by the change will be notified in writing of their new points level.

* or a tenant of certain RSLs (see page 26)

Allowed property size

The Council assesses the size of home each applicant requires, according to their household size and composition, and any other special considerations. This is the allowed property size.

Normally applicants can only bid for and/or be offered a property of the allowed property size. Sizes are expressed in terms of the number of bedrooms in the property.

The allowed property size takes into account these rules:

- a) A single-parent household is entitled to the same size of property as a two-parent household.
- b) The following persons are disregarded:
 - anyone other than the applicant's immediate family (i.e. partner and dependant children) who has not lived with them for the previous six months
 - anyone who is not qualified to join the housing list other than the applicant's partner and dependent children
 - children who live with the applicant less than 50% of the time (evidence of residence orders will be sought).
- c) In the case of transferring tenants, their household for the purpose of assessment may only include authorised occupants, and must include all authorised occupants (unless some other rehousing option is open to an occupant, and the tenant is able to guarantee vacant possession when they transfer).
- d) Where a pregnancy has been medically confirmed, the unborn child is counted as a child under 12 months old for the purpose of these rules.

The allowed property size is normally calculated as follows:

- Either a combined bedroom/living room (studio) or one bedroom for single-person households
- One bedroom for an applicant and their partner, or for a single parent

- One bedroom for any adult child in the household (aged 18+)
- One bedroom for two children of the same sex aged under 18
- One bedroom for two children of different sexes aged under 10
- One bedroom for any child aged under 18 who cannot be 'paired' in the above way
- Where children can be paired in different ways, the way that produces the smallest allowed property size will be used.

Exceptions to the property size rules

The following exceptions are made to the above rules:

- For applicants with one child under 12 months old, the allowed property size is a one-bedroom property
- Tenants in Group A (see page 6) may return to a property one bedroom larger than their allowed property size
- Applicants whose allowed property size is five or six bedrooms are allowed to bid for, or be directly offered, properties with one bedroom less than their allowed property size, because of the shortage of larger properties.
- Applicants whose allowed property size is seven or more bedrooms are allowed to bid for, or be directly offered, properties with six or more bedrooms (up to their allowed property size), because of the extreme shortage of very large properties.
- Where the Medical Adviser in conjunction with Lambeth Adults' and Community Services or the Children and Young Persons' Service recommends increasing the allowed property size on medical grounds (which may specifically relate to the needs of a child in the household) or to allow a carer to live with the applicant. Only one extra room will be granted for a carer: provision will not be made for any members of a carer's household.
- Tenants and leaseholders being decanted by the Council in Group C whose allowed property size has fewer bedrooms than the property they are leaving are allowed to bid for, or be directly offered, a property with one bedroom more than their allowed size.

- Council tenants placed in Group B because of a serious threat of violence or harassment (see page 7) are allowed to bid for, or be directly offered, a property with the same number of bedrooms as their current home, or the allowed property size, if this is smaller.
- Underoccupying Council tenants of 4-bedroom or larger properties who are eligible for the Transfer Incentive Scheme (see page 9) are allowed to bid for, or be directly offered, a property one bedroom larger than their allowed property size, if they so request.
- Where two of the above exceptions to the rules conflict, the more generous rule will be applied.
- In exceptional cases the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing may at his discretion allocate to an applicant a property which is either smaller or larger than their allowed property size.

Examples

The examples below, while not exhaustive, show the allowed property size for the most common household compositions:

Studios (self-contained flats with a combined living room and bedroom) are offered to single people (not including pregnant single women).

One-bedroom homes are offered to:

- a single person
- a couple
- a couple or single parent expecting a child
- a couple or single parent with one child under 12 months old (but not if they are expecting another child).

Two-bedroom homes are offered to:

- a couple or single parent with one child over 12 months old
- a couple or single parent with two children under 18 of the same sex
- a couple or single parent with two children under 10 of the opposite sex
- two adults not living as a couple (e.g. siblings).

Three-bedroom homes are offered to:

- A couple or single parent with two children of the opposite sex, where at least one of them is aged 10 or over
- A couple or single parent with three children under 18
- A couple or single parent with four children, where the children can all be 'paired' using the rules above.

Four-bedroom homes are offered to a couple or single parent with four children who cannot be 'paired' using the rules above, or with five children. They can also be offered to families who bid for them whose allowed property size is a five-bedroom home.

Five-bedroom homes are offered to a couple or single parent with six or seven children. They can also be offered to families who bid for them whose allowed property size is a six bedroom home.

Six-bedroom homes are offered to a couple or single parent with eight or more children.

Authorisation for an offer

Applicants in Allocation Groups A-G, and those in Group H who have sufficient points to be in contention for an offer, will have their cases considered for authorisation in the light of their current circumstances.

Any applicant on the housing list can bid for a property (see page 18), but only authorised applicants can receive offers. Authorisation does not guarantee that an offer will be made.

Home visits

The Council (or another council or registered social landlord acting on its behalf) may visit any applicant in their home prior or subsequent to authorising them for an offer, to check that their housing circumstances are as set out in their application for housing.

At least 24 hours' notice will be given to applicants of impending home visits. Applicants are expected to allow visiting officers access to all parts of their home. Failure to do so will normally result in the applicant not being authorised for an offer.

Employees and Members of the Council, and their relatives

All housing applicants are asked whether they or any of their relatives work for the Council, or are an elected Councillor. Such applicants will be subject to special authorisation procedures, to ensure that the criteria in the Allocation Scheme have been properly applied to them.

Relatives of the employee or Councillor are:

- anyone living with them as their partner, or as a member of their household
- natural/adoptive/step-parents
- children
- sisters and brothers
- daughters- or sons-in-law
- grandparents
- aunts and uncles
- estranged spouses or partners, regardless of whether they live as part of the applicant's household

Applicants who will not be authorised

The following applicants will not normally be authorised for an offer:

- Council tenants on introductory tenancies;
- Council tenants with a valid Possession Order or money judgment obtained against them, or who have been served with a Notice of Seeking Possession or Notice of Proceedings for Possession which remains valid;
- Secure Council tenants or former Council tenants with rent arrears (whether in respect of current or former tenancies) of more than one week's unrebated rent, unless these arrears have accrued for reasons beyond their control (for example, as a result of delays in the administration of their housing benefit);
- Applicants who have been found to be intentionally homeless (or where a member of their household has been found to be intentionally homeless) by any local authority under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 within the previous 6 months;
- Applicants who are freehold, leasehold or shared owners of housing properties that are, or could be, available for their occupation, or are considered to have sufficient financial resources to buy a property in the Borough suitable for their household (either freehold, leasehold, or as a shared owner), or to rent a property in the Borough on the private market suitable for their household, without the assistance of housing benefit;
- Applicants who are considered to have voluntarily worsened their circumstances within the previous 6 months, with the effect of increasing their priority under the Allocation Scheme (for example, someone who has given up a tenancy voluntarily, to move into less suitable housing);

De-authorising applicants

If at any point it comes to the Council's attention that an applicant who has been authorised for an offer falls into any of the above categories, the authorisation will be cancelled.

Re-authorising applicants

When a period of de-authorisation comes to an end, the applicant will be considered for re-authorisation, and for transfer to an Allocation Group other than D or H if appropriate. This will depend on their circumstances at that time.

Exercise of discretion in exceptional cases

At the discretion of the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing, applicants who would not normally be authorised for an offer may be authorised, subject to any conditions that the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing may care to attach.

One example would be where a household's composite needs are considered to outweigh the case for de-authorisation.

Choice

To enable applicants to exercise greater choice over where they live, the Council has introduced choice-based lettings.

The scheme works by the Council advertising available properties, normally on a weekly basis, and inviting interested applicants to bid for (i.e. register their interest in) them.

Advertising properties

With the exception of any properties retained for direct offers (see page 19), the Council will advertise its housing properties that are available for letting, along with some housing association properties (see page 25):

- in posters circulated to area housing offices and libraries
- and
- via the internet, on the Home Connections website www.homeconnections.org.uk

The advertisement for a property will show:

- the **location** of the property
- **details** of the property in terms of property type, number of bedrooms, floor level, etc.
- where available, a **photograph** of the property (or of the block or road in which it is located)
- the weekly rent inclusive of any service charges that are applicable
- the **allocation groups** which will be given preference when an offer of that property is made
- any **restrictions** on households to whom an offer will be made (e.g. in the case of a sheltered housing property)

Bidding for properties

Applicants interested in an advertised property or properties make bids (i.e. register their interest in the property) in the following ways:

- Via the Home Connections website
- By telephone to the Home Connections dedicated automated telephone bidding line
- By mobile phone text (SMS) to the Home Connections text bidding number

An applicant may bid for a property even if they are not in one of the allocation groups being given preference for that property.

Bids from applicants will only be considered if the property bid for is of an appropriate size for the applicant's household (see page 14) and they are not excluded by any restrictions on the property's letting.

With an applicant's consent, other persons may submit bids for a property on the applicant's behalf.

Bids must be received by the deadline date for bidding, which will be made clear in the advertisement.

Suitability of offers

Regardless of whether an applicant has expressed interest in a property, the Council will endeavour to ensure that all properties offered to applicants are **suitable** for their needs, taking into account all relevant factors and any statutory or case law requirements.

Applicants may bring to the Council's notice any factors which they consider affect the suitability, or unsuitability, of any particular accommodation. Where the Council accepts such factors as relevant, appropriate parameters will be set for any offers made to that applicant. In the case of medical factors, the opinion of the Medical Adviser will be sought.

Where the suitability of an offered property in terms of property size is being considered, it is the suitability of the property **at the date that the offer was made**, rather than any later date, which will be taken into account.

Suitability is of particular relevance in the case of direct offers (see page 19) and sanctions for their refusal (see page 20).

Choice for disabled people

The Council naturally wishes to extend the benefits of choice-based lettings to disabled people. Wheelchair, mobility and adapted housing (see page 21) will therefore normally be advertised and open to bids from households who need the particular facilities or features of those properties.

Discretion not to make an offer

In exceptional cases the Council may refuse to make an offer to a household that has bid for a property because of concerns about the health, safety or welfare of the applicant or of any other person or persons if the applicant took up occupation of that particular property.

For example, any offer to a registered sex offender will be made in the light of considered decisions about managing the risks associated with their living in the community, involving multi-agency arrangements with the police, probation services, social services, health professionals and other relevant bodies. Offers that are not consistent with the Council's assessment of the appropriate management of these risks will not be made. The Council will have regard to Government guidance on the management of risk in such cases.

Number of bids and invitations to view

Generally authorised applicants (see page 16) may make as many bids for advertised properties as they wish. There are two exceptions:

- Applicants in Group A will not be able to make bids: instead they will be made a direct offer of the property to which they are returning.
- Applicants in Groups B, C, E and G will normally be given a time limit within which to make bids. These time limits may differ for different households, for example according to the size of property they require, or the Council's performance in rehousing households in that allocation group against the targets set in the Lettings Plan (see page 23). If by the end of that time the applicant has not received an offer, a review will be carried out and the applicant may be:

- made a direct offer
- or**
- given an extension to their bidding period
- or**
- moved to Group D or Group H, as appropriate.

In deciding which course of action to take, the Council will take into account all relevant factors, including whether the applicant:

- is owed a duty of rehousing by the Council under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) or any other legislation
- has taken the opportunity to bid for properties
- received any offers of suitable properties
- needs more assistance with making bids, or is incapable of making bids.

While there is generally no limit on the number of bids an applicant may make, the Council reserves the right to limit the number of properties that an applicant is invited to view in one bidding round (normally 7 days) to two properties.

Direct offers

Not all properties becoming available for letting will be offered through choice-based lettings. The Council reserves the right to make a direct offer of a property at any time to an applicant in circumstances where it considers this would be advantageous. Examples of such circumstances include:

- discharging the Council's housing duty to an applicant under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 or other legislation
- where the property is of a very specialised type
- emergencies.

Offers under choice-based lettings

The highest priority applicant or applicants bidding and eligible and suitable for an advertised property will be contacted to arrange an appointment for them to view it. Applicants unable to view a property quickly will lose their right to be considered for it.

Applicants may be invited to view the property on an individual basis, or the top three (or occasionally more) applicants may be invited to view the property simultaneously. In the latter case their relative priority will be made clear to applicants.

The highest priority applicant still expressing interest in the property after viewing it will be made an immediate offer of the tenancy.

The Council is conscious of the need to keep the number of vacant Council properties to a minimum. Applicants are therefore normally required to accept an offer within **one working day** of viewing the property: otherwise they will normally be deemed to have refused it. A longer period up to five working days will be given to people with mental health problems or adults with learning difficulties who require support or advice before making a decision.

Applicants for sheltered, wheelchair and mobility housing will have **five working days** after viewing the property to decide whether to accept it, before they are deemed to have refused it.

In the case of direct offers, applicants will be required to accept an offer within **two working days** of receiving the offer: otherwise they will normally be deemed to have refused it. The same extended deadlines as above will apply to people with mental health problems, adults with learning difficulties, and applicants for sheltered wheelchair and mobility housing.

Sanctions for refusal of direct offers

Applicants who refuse an offer will be asked for their reasons for refusal. In the case of direct offers, the Council will consider whether the offer was suitable in the light of those reasons. In the case of medical factors, the opinion of the Medical Adviser will be sought.

Applicants in any of Groups A-C and E-G who refuse a suitable direct offer may be removed from that Group and placed in Group D or H as appropriate.

Depending on the type of applicant, there may be other consequences of refusing a direct offer. For example, the Council may pursue possession action under Ground 10 of Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985 against a tenant due for decanting in Allocation Groups B or C, or it may conclude that it has discharged its statutory housing duty towards a homeless household in Allocation Group E.

Allocations to certain properties

Ground floor flats

Ground floor flats which are suitable for people with health problems will be allocated to applicants who have been awarded priority on medical grounds as needing ground floor accommodation, unless there is no applicant with medical priority for whom the property is suitable.

Sheltered housing

An applicant for sheltered housing (and their partner if they have one) must normally:

- be aged 60 or over, and retired from their lifetime employment, or
- be aged 55 or over and have a disability, or
- be aged 55 or over and have a mental health problem

They must also:

- need the security of an alarm system and the assistance of the sheltered housing officer (warden) and
- be able to care for themselves with the help of community care services (such as home helps or meals-on-wheels) and
- not require a high level of nursing care and domiciliary services.

Applications for nomination to special sheltered accommodation for the frail elderly, managed by housing associations, are assessed in conjunction with Lambeth Adults' and Community Services.

In allocating two-bedroom sheltered dwellings, preference will be given to:

- couples or joint applicants who are assessed as needing separate bedrooms; or
- applicants who need an additional room for a carer.

Wheelchair, mobility, and adapted housing

Wheelchair housing is housing specially designed for people confined to wheelchairs, and includes space for a wheelchair to manoeuvre.

Mobility housing is general purpose housing with no extra space, but built to be more convenient for people with mobility problems.

Adapted housing is general purpose housing which has had aids fitted or adaptations made to it, to help a person with a disability live there.

Applicants for all these types of housing must display a recognisable need for them. The Council will assess:

- the extent of the applicants' present disability
- their level of mobility and functioning in daily living activities (indoors, outdoors, stairs, transferring from place to place)
- their use and potential use of relevant aids and adaptations
- the cost of adapting their current home
- the limitations of their present housing to the disabled person and their family
- the type of property and facilities needed in future accommodation

The appropriateness of the applicant's existing accommodation, and the effect that the condition of that accommodation has on their medical condition, will both be taken into account.

Where an applicant does not display a recognised need for these types of accommodation they will not be regarded as suitable for the applicant (see Offers under choice-based lettings, page 20).

Exercise of discretion

In exceptional cases the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing may, at his or her discretion, allocate properties of the above types to applicants who would not normally qualify for them.

Properties managed by TMOs

Some estates owned by the Council are managed by tenants themselves, through tenant management organisations (TMOs).

Information for prospective tenants

The Council will provide prospective tenants of TMOs with general information about TMOs, and any leaflets supplied by the TMOs themselves.

Offers to prospective tenants of TMOs

To encourage tenants to participate in the TMO, TMOs may ask tenants viewing properties to sign to indicate their willingness to subscribe to two documents, **Responsibilities of Membership of the TMO**, and **Co-operative Principles and Values**.

The content of these documents will be agreed between the TMO and the Council. Tenants may also be asked to join the TMO at a nominal cost of not more than £1.

In the event that prospective tenants are unwilling to sign these documents, or to join the TMO, they will not normally be made an offer of the TMO property.

Split households who wish to live together

Without prejudice to the provisions of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, under which split households may be treated as homeless in some circumstances, at the discretion of the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing, a property may be allocated to two or more applicants on the housing list who wish to live together, where it is considered to be in the Council's interest.

An example would be where two Council tenants are living in separate tenancies and wish to live together, giving the Council back two properties for re-letting in return for one new tenancy.

Allocating properties

The Lettings Plan

The Council agrees and publishes an annual Lettings Plan which sets out the expected supply of properties for letting over the course of the year, and their proposed distribution between the eight Allocation Groups via a series of targets or quotas. Separate targets or quotas may be set for allocations to different size dwellings.

In deciding this distribution, the Council will take into account the totality of the demand for housing in the Borough, paying particular regard to the need to fulfil its statutory duties, minimise the cost of temporary accommodation for homeless households, and meet its other priority housing objectives.

During the year the Lettings Plan will be kept under review, and the targets or quotas may be changed at the discretion of the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing, to take account of changing demand and/or supply factors, performance to date on achieving the targets, and the relative needs of the priority groups between themselves.

Prioritising applicants for properties

When a property is advertised under choice-based lettings, the allocating officer will specify which Allocation Groups will be given priority when bids are considered

Applicants in Allocation Groups B and C will have priority for all properties advertised under choice-based lettings.

Additionally applicants in one other Allocation Group will be given priority for an individual property, whichever Group is furthest proportionally behind its target in the Lettings Plan for that size of property. The overall aim is to achieve the targets set for the different Allocation Groups in the Lettings Plan.

After the bidding deadline has closed, a prioritised shortlist of applicants will be drawn up, giving preference to applicants in the Allocation Groups which had priority for the property. Applicants in Group B will have the highest priority, then applicants in Group C, then those in the other prioritised Group.

Priority within an Allocation Group

Within any Allocation Group, priority is given to the highest level or highest pointed applicant within that Group who has submitted a bid for the property.

For Allocation Groups A-C and E-G, the level of the applicant is first taken into account (Level 3 being the highest priority and Level 1 the lowest). Priority between applicants on the same level will depend on the date they joined the Group, i.e. the longer since that date, the higher their priority. In the case of Group E the date is the day they made an application as homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Within Allocation Groups D and H, the priority of applicants depends on their points level (see page 12). Where applicants have the same points level, priority between them will depend on the date of their registration on the housing list, i.e. the longer since that date, the higher their priority.

Bids from applicants in other Allocation Groups

Where there are no applicants, or no suitable or eligible applicants, from within the Allocation Groups given priority for a property, the allocating officer will consider bids from applicants in other Allocation Groups.

The order in which these other Allocation Groups are considered will depend on which Group is furthest proportionally behind its target in the Lettings Plan for that size of property.

Allocating similar properties

Where a group of similar properties in an allocation area becomes available for letting or nomination at the same time, usually through a new build development or as part of a regeneration scheme, then a 'bulk' advertisement may be used, and more than one Allocation Group (in addition to Groups B and C) may be given priority for the properties advertised.

Joint tenancies

The Council encourages joint tenancies, where two adults in a household become joint tenants of the same Council property. Both tenants are then jointly and individually responsible for ensuring the tenancy agreement is kept to.

Both the parties to a joint tenancy must individually qualify to join the housing list (see page 4), and to be authorised for an offer (see page 16).

If the Council refuses to grant a joint tenancy, it will provide the applicants with clear reasons for its refusal, in writing.

When one of two joint tenants gives notice to the Council to terminate the tenancy, the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing may, at his or her discretion, decide to offer the property (or an alternative property) as a sole tenancy to the other joint tenant.

Occupants of Council properties without succession rights

When a secure Council tenant dies, a person living with them at the time of their death may have a right to succeed to the tenancy under Part 4 of the Housing Act 1985. Such cases are outside the scope of the Allocation Scheme (see page 2).

When the tenant dies and no other household member has succession rights to the tenancy, but a household member has:

- been living with the tenant for the year prior to the tenant's demise;

or

- been caring for the tenant;

or

- accepted responsibility for the tenant's dependants;

then the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing may at his or her discretion grant a tenancy to that person, either in the same home or in suitable alternative accommodation.

Factors taken into account in such cases will include whether the household member is in urgent housing need, or would be if the tenancy were not to be offered to them, and the implications of such an allocation for making good use of the housing stock and continuing to provide for other households in need.

Housing association properties

As well as governing the selection of applicants for Council tenancies, the Allocation Scheme covers nominations to assured tenancies offered by registered social landlords (RSLs), and to secure tenancies offered by other landlords (usually other councils).

RSLs are housing associations and housing co-operatives registered with the Housing Corporation. RSLs with housing in Lambeth are required to offer a proportion of their lettings to the Council.

Other councils and registered social landlords operating outside the Borough may also offer housing to Lambeth applicants nominated through the various schemes described below.

Nomination agreements with RSLs

The Council is entitled to a minimum of 50% nominations to RSL schemes in Lambeth funded by the Housing Corporation.

Wherever possible, however, nomination agreements have been negotiated with RSLs operating in the Borough to increase the number of nominations. These agreements determine the proportion of each RSL's properties which will be offered to the Council as nominations.

Under the standard nomination agreement, RSLs offer the Council nomination rights to 50% of true voids in their studios, one-bedroom flats, and sheltered housing, and to 75% of true voids in their family-sized properties. Associations are also asked to prioritise Council nominees for one-bedroom ground-floor properties.

Where the Council has provided funding, or land below market value, or provided major repair or renovation grant funding, higher percentages of lettings for Council nominees may be negotiated.

RSLs and choice-based lettings

When a vacant property is offered to the Council for nomination, the Council will normally advertise it for a choice-based letting, in the same way that it would advertise a Council property (see page 18).

In the case of larger new or regenerated housing association schemes, the procedure for allocating similar properties (see page 23) will normally be followed.

RSLs will be provided with a nominee or nominee from a prioritised list of the top eligible and suitable applicants who have made a bid on the property, RSLs will make their own arrangements for applicants to view the properties, but will respect the relative priority of the applicants nominated to them for the property.

Refusal of a nominee by the RSL

RSLs must provide the Council with clear reasons in writing if they refuse any nominee.

If a nominee refuses an offer

If, after viewing a property, a nominee is offered but fails to accept the tenancy within one working day (general needs housing) or five working days (sheltered/wheelchair/mobility housing), the nominee is deemed to have refused the offer.

If a nominee refuses an offer of a tenancy, the RSL will offer the property to the next nominee (where it has been supplied with more than one nominee, but respecting priority order) or request a further nominee from the Council. If a property has not been accepted after being offered for viewing to five nominees, discussions will take place between the RSL and the Council to identify the reasons for refusal, and to agree the most appropriate course of action to expedite the letting of the property.

For reasons similar to those applying to the Council's own properties (see page 19), the Council may decide to make a direct nomination to an RSL rather than advertising the property for a choice-based letting. The Council will also make direct nominations in the case of properties owned by Black and Minority Ethnic RSLs to which s.26 of the Race Relations Act 1976 applies.

The sanctions for refusal of direct offers apply also to the refusal of properties offered via direct nominations.

Levels of participation by RSLs in choice-based lettings

Putting RSL properties on which the Council has nomination rights into the Council's choice-based scheme is the base level of participation in choice-based lettings, applying to all RSLs in Lambeth.

The Council however encourages RSLs working in Lambeth to participate in choice-based lettings at a **higher level**. At this level RSLs put all of their available properties into the choice-based letting scheme, rather than just those on which the Council has nomination rights.

Certain advantages accrue to RSLs participating at the higher level:

- They are consulted before formulation of the Council's annual Lettings Plan (see page 43)
- Their tenants qualify for Allocation Groups A, B, C or D on a par with Council tenants
- They can if they wish operate a direct IT link with Home Connections, speeding up their letting process

Social housing outside Lambeth

Council homes outside Lambeth

The Council owns a small number of properties in Bromley and Sutton (Greater London), Frome (Somerset) and Banbury (Oxfordshire). Vacancies rarely arise, but when one does it is advertised in the same way as properties in the Borough.

South-West London

The Council also has nomination rights to a limited number of new RSL properties in the London Boroughs of Croydon, Kingston, Merton, Richmond, Sutton and Wandsworth.

When such a property becomes available, it is advertised in the same way as RSL properties in Lambeth to which the Council has nomination rights.

Nominations to other social landlords

Lambeth residents can apply directly to join another council's housing list. Such applications will be covered by that council's own housing allocation scheme.

In some cases it may be possible for the Council to nominate a Lambeth applicant to another borough, or to a housing association outside Lambeth, under a mobility scheme.

Arrangements for mobility schemes at regional and national level are currently under review.

The Council will do its best to help applicants who wish to move to other boroughs via a nomination, but this can be very difficult. Restrictions are usually placed by other social landlords on who can be nominated to them, and it is the other landlord's decision whether to accept a nomination.

Seaside and Country Homes

Council and RSL tenants aged 60 or over and capable of independent living, who want to be rehoused in another part of the country, can be considered for the Seaside and Country Homes scheme. A local connection is not required.

The Council will nominate eligible applicants who are authorised for an offer (see page 16) directly to housingmoves.org which manages the scheme.

Information and assistance

Confidentiality

The fact that a person is an applicant on the housing list, and the details of their application, will not be divulged to any third party or member of the public without the applicant's consent (whether express or implied).

Information may however be shared with other public bodies in order to protect public funds, or to prevent or detect fraud. It may also be disclosed to the police or other authorities where the law allows.

The Council may also pass information provided by applicants to an external agency, on a confidential basis, for the purpose of checking that information.

Help in making an application, bidding and viewing

The Council will provide advice and information free of charge to potential applicants about their right to join the housing list, including an application form.

Any necessary help in making an application, or in bidding for a property, will be given free of charge to applicants who are likely to have difficulty applying, bidding or viewing homes without that assistance.

The Council will also support professionals, agencies and carers with advice and training to help them assist vulnerable applicants with these functions.

Applicants' prospects of an offer

Anyone on the housing list has the right to request general information about how they are likely to be treated under the Allocation Scheme, including what preference their application is being given, whether they are likely to be made an offer, and if so, how long it is likely to be before they receive an offer.

Information on likely waiting times for an offer will necessarily be in very general terms, because with choice-based lettings it is impossible to know how many applicants will bid for an available property until it is advertised.

Information about the Allocation Scheme

This document is available for inspection during working hours at the Regeneration and Housing department's principal office at Hambrook House, Porden Road, Brixton, SW2 1RP. Copies of this document are also available from the Council for a fee of £3.50, or the document can be freely downloaded (in Adobe Acrobat format) from the Council's website.

A booklet summarising this Allocation Scheme, called *Applying for Housing in Lambeth*, is available free of charge.

Decisions and reviews

Decisions

Applicants have the right to request information from the Council about any decisions on the facts of their cases which are likely to be, or have been taken into account, in considering whether to allocate them accommodation. They will then be informed of any such decisions that have been made.

Reviews

Applicants dissatisfied with a decision that has been made (including a decision on the suitability of an offer of accommodation) may request a review of that decision by an officer of the Council who was not involved in the original decision, and who is senior to the officer who made the original decision.

Requests for a review must be made in writing within 21 days of the date the decision was notified to the applicant, and should include the applicant's reasons for believing the decision made was wrong.

The applicant will be informed in writing of the decision made at the review, and the grounds for it.

Reviews of decisions made under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (homelessness) are outside the scope of this Scheme.

Persons by whom decisions are taken

Decisions under the Allocation Scheme may be taken by, and any discretion shown in the Allocation Scheme as belonging to the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing may be exercised by, officers of Lambeth Council who have been given appropriate delegated authority by the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing.

A schedule setting out the delegated authority of officers under the Allocation Scheme will be provided to applicants or other members of the public on request.

Councillors will not make any decisions on individual applications under the Allocation Scheme, whether or not they are prevented by statutory regulation from doing so.

Monitoring

The Council will regularly monitor the outcomes of the allocations scheme and prepare reports. Such monitoring will include:

- Actual lettings against the Lettings Plan (see page 23)
- Ethnic monitoring of applicants and lettings
- Participation levels in choice-based lettings

Spanish

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Portuguese

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